



STORIES BY KATHRYN JACKSON

THE ANIMALS.
MERRY CHRISTMAS

PICTURES BY
RICHARD SCARRY

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The Singing Christmas Tree

A LITTLE deer came skipping home through the snowy woods. His eyes were still shining from the wonderful things he had seen. His heart felt as light as a snowflake, and as warm as he always felt close to his mother's side.

"Oh, Mother!" he cried. "I went to the town and peeped in the window of a house. There was a tree inside, glittering and shining, with stars caught in its branches—red and green ones, blue and white. And it was all hung with bright balls that sparkled the light all over the room!"

The mother deer nodded her head slowly. Her eyes shone, too.

"That was a Christmas tree," she said softly. "At Christmas time, people deck their trees with lights and toys and shining things—"

"Christmas tree!" whispered the little deer. "Oh, Mother, I want a Christmas tree!"

The mother deer pawed the snowy ground thoughtfully. Oh, how much she wanted a tree for her baby! At last an idea came to her.

"Follow me," she said. She took her baby farther into the woods, and showed him a small green tree in a little clearing.

"We'll put berries on the branches. We'll put tasty shoots on them and tender roots."

The little deer helped. He worked busily. But when the tree was dressed, it was not bright and shining like the tree in town.

"Never mind," said his mother. "Wait until morning. Then we'll come to look at it again."

Soon the baby deer was back at home, tucked closely to his mother's side. Soon he was asleep in the dark, snow-clad woods. And just as the sun came up, his mother awakened him.

Deep into the woods they went on their quiet feet. Close to the clearing they stopped and peeped in. The little deer opened his eyes and his mouth. Icicles hung from his Christmas tree, shining with sunrise. Snowflakes sparkled on it, in red and blue and green. And on all the branches were dozens of bright singing birds, eating the berries and roots and shoots.

"Merry Christmas!" they sang on that early Christmas morning. "Merry Christmas!" they chattered between bites.

The little deer nuzzled his nose in his mother's neck.

"It's a beautiful tree!" he whispered. "Much more beautiful than the tree in town!"

And still the birds sang, and the mother deer smiled happily, and one by one, the other animals came through the woods to look at the little deer's wonderful singing Christmas tree.

TERRIBLE TEDDY BEAR



NOW Terrible Teddy Bear did not look like a terrible bear at all. He was the brown kind of teddy bear, just the size to take to bed. And he had a funny little squeak, and shiny black eyes and a bit of a smile. But he WAS a terrible teddy just the same.

Even Santa Claus, who had made this teddy and who had said, "He's the best bear I ever did make!" decided that at last.

"This terrible teddy bear!" he said the first Christmas morning at breakfast. "This terrible teddy bear climbed out of my pack last night. He hid under the seat of my sleigh. When I got back home, there he was—back home too! And not where ever I meant to leave him for some good child!"

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Santa Claus. And she was still saying "Dear, dear!" five Christmases later. Because every Christmas Eve, Terrible Teddy Bear climbed out of the toy pack. Every Christ-

mas Eve he hid in a different place. And every Christmas morning he was back home at the North Pole.

On the fifth Christmas morning Santa Claus made up his mind to do something about Terrible Teddy.

He hurried into his workshop and looked at the letters in the basket marked NO! That basket was chockful of letters from people who didn't deserve presents and did not get presents. Santa Claus al-

ways felt very sad when he looked at those letters.

Just the same, he sat down and read them all.

He read straight through lunch and halfway through supper. Then he jumped up, holding a crumpled letter in one red mitten.

"Here is a letter from someone more terrible than Terrible Teddy," he said. "Here is a letter from Terrible Tommy,

who says 'I won't' all day long, and eats nothing but candy and bubble gum, and besides—he never will go to bed at night."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Santa Claus. "You can't EVER take him a present!"

"Oh, yes I can," Santa laughed. "I'm going to his house right now—a special trip. And I'm going to give him Terrible Teddy!"

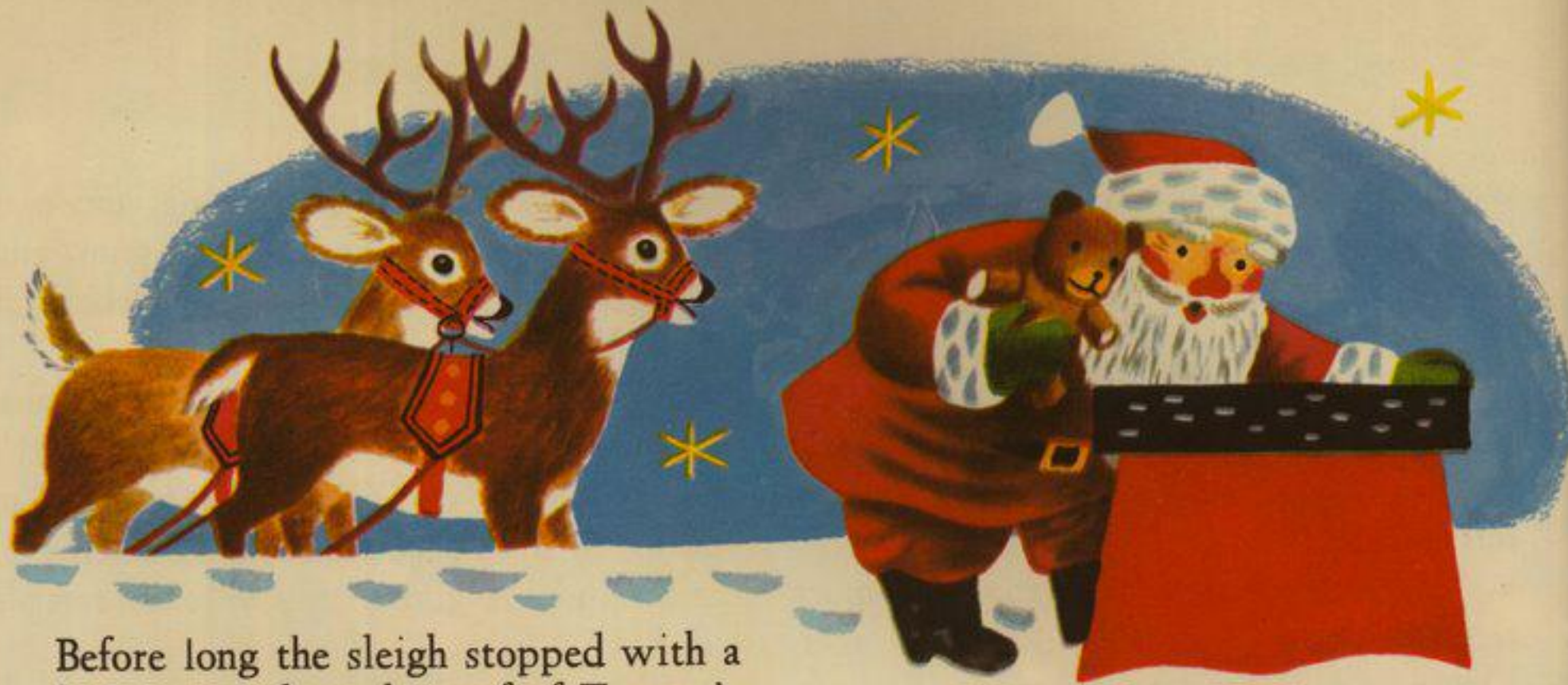
"Dear, dear!" Mrs. Santa Claus said. "Dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear!"

But by that time the reindeer were harnessed, the sleigh was out of the barn. And Santa was driving over the roof tops on Christmas night.

He was driving one-handed at that. In his other hand he held Terrible Teddy, tight as tight.

Terrible Teddy certainly didn't look terrible now. He was trying very hard to squeak, "Oh, please don't give me to Terrible Tommy!" But Santa held him too tightly.





Before long the sleigh stopped with a jerk. It stopped on the roof of Tommy's house.

All the lights were out.

Everyone was asleep. Everyone, that is, except Terrible Tommy.

He sat by the hearth, rubbing his eyes and blowing his nose. He sobbed a bit, too.

"Santa Claus didn't come to me," he cried. "He didn't bring me a thing. Not even some ashes and switches. Not even some old, worn, patched britches. Not even a horn that wouldn't blow. Not even anything. Oh, oh, oh! And I wanted a teddy bear, even an old one, a brown and plushy and nice-to-hold one—with shiny eyes in his fuzzy head, the kind that's the size for taking to bed."

Santa Claus, up on the roof, heard Terrible Tommy. He blew some ashes down to make Tommy close his eyes. And when Tommy did—

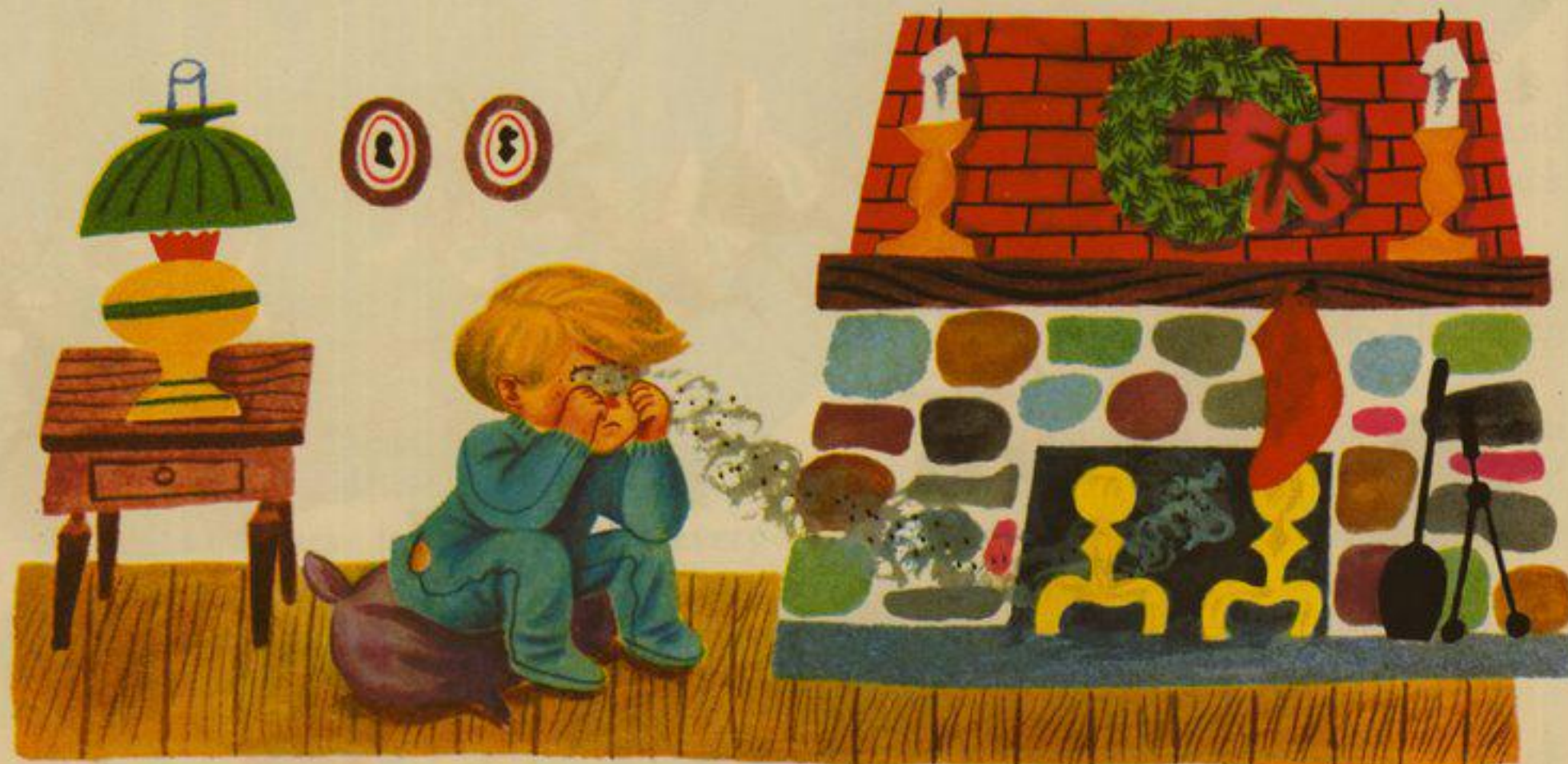
Whisk! down the chimney came Santa.

Whisk! up he went again, leaving Terrible Teddy behind.

Away went the sleigh with its bells all jingling.

Terrible Tommy opened his eyes—and there, right in front of him, sat Terrible Teddy.

"Santa did come!" cried Tommy. "He made a special trip just for me—and he brought the nicest, softest, best kind of Teddy Bear in the whole world!"



He picked up Terrible Teddy and hugged him tightly. Teddy liked that so much that he hugged back. Tommy liked that so much that he felt good from head to toe.

And right then all the Terrible went straight out of Tommy.

It went out of Teddy, too.

Up the stairs they went, both together. Both together they climbed into Tommy's bed. Both together they went sound asleep.

And they looked just like a good little boy sleeping, and a good teddy bear sleeping, too.

By that time, of course, Santa Claus was back at the North Pole.

"Dear, dear, dear," said Mrs. Santa. "I just don't think you should have gone on that special trip. I just don't think you should have taken a present to anyone who is bad!"

Santa Claus chuckled and hung up his hat. He laughed and hung up his coat.

"I'll tell you a secret, Mrs. Santa," he said. "Terrible Tommy isn't bad any more. He's as good as a boy can be. Terrible Teddy isn't bad, either."

Then Santa Claus clapped his knees with pleasure.

"I always did say he was the best bear I ever made," he said. "And it wouldn't be right for Santa Claus to be wrong, would it, now?"

Mrs. Santa Claus didn't say "Dear, dear!"

She said:

"Of course not.

That would

Never

Never

NEVER

Do!"



THE GOAT WHO PLAYED SANTA CLAUS



ONCE upon a time there were five little chicks who thought Santa Claus was sure to come to them. It was the day before Christmas, and they were very much excited.

"He'll bring us a tree of the Christmas kind," they told each other. "And five Christmas presents—one for each!"

Everyone in the barnyard wanted those chicks to have a happy Christmas.

But Grandmother Goose was worried.

And old Turkey Gobbler was very worried.

"Santa Claus never *did* come to us," he said. "I just don't think he comes to barnyards."

"Neither do I," sighed Grandmother Goose. "And what I say is, somebody should tell those chicks."

She tied on her shawl.

Old Turkey Gobbler pulled on his cap.

"Come along," he said. "We'll tell them."

But before they had gone two waddles and a strut, fat Uncle Pig hurried up to them.

"Oh no, you don't," he cried. "You're not going to spoil those little chicks' fun!"

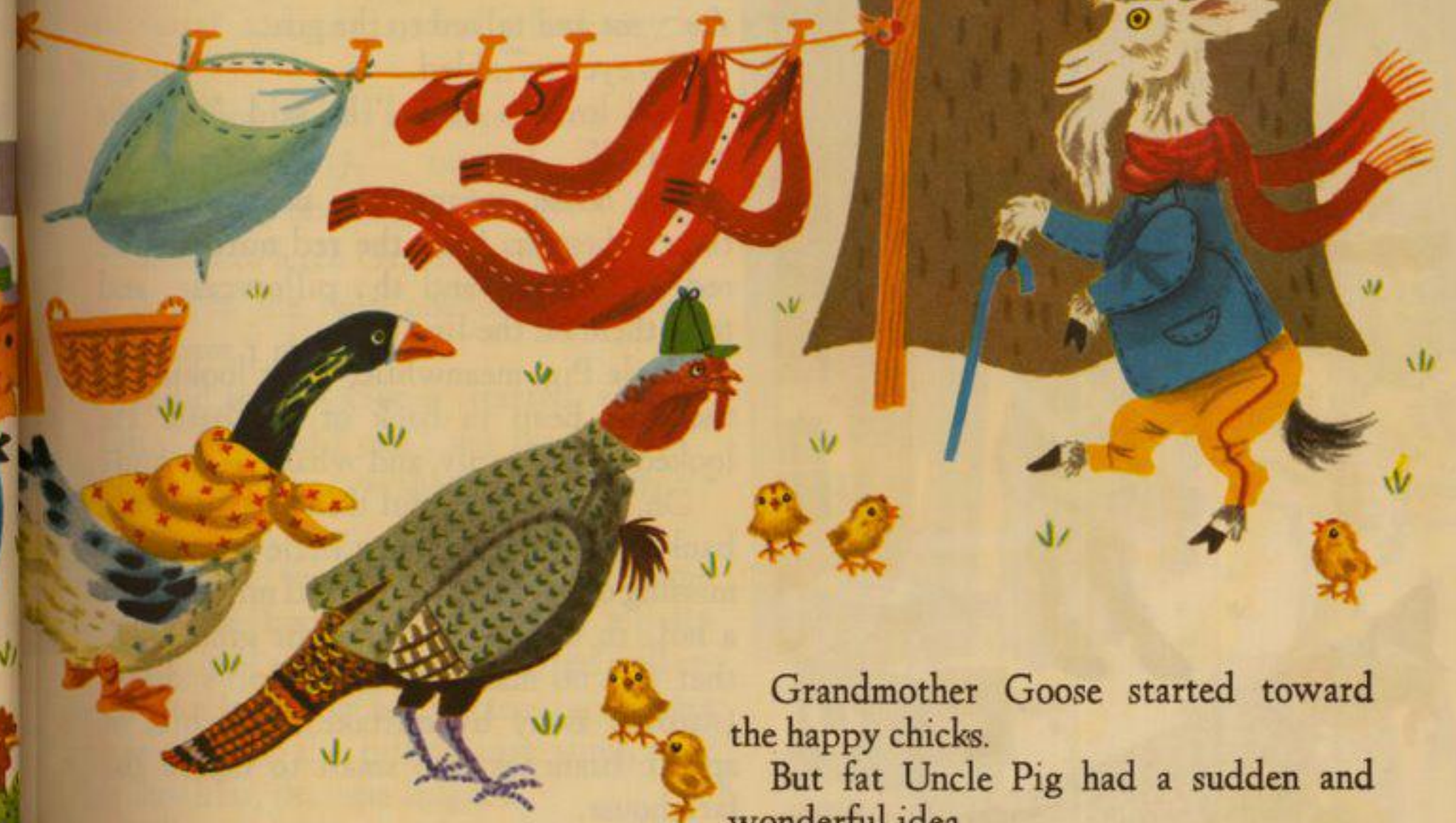
The cow agreed.

So did the horse.

"Indeed you won't!" bleated the sheep, running up.

Mother Hen smiled.

"Good!" she cackled. "I just do want my chicks to have a nice Christmas!"



Old Turkey Gobbler snorted.

"All very well," he said. "But what about Christmas morning?"

"What when they find that Santa Claus didn't come?" asked Grandmother Goose.

"Oh," said Mother Hen.

She looked sadly at her yellow chicks, who were skittering around trying to sing "Up on the Housetop" in their peeping voices. She looked even more sadly at her barnyard friends.

"My chicks were so sure Santa Claus would come," she sighed, "that I myself was believing it, too."

The cow and the horse and the sheep sighed deeply.

Grandmother Goose started toward the happy chicks.

But fat Uncle Pig had a sudden and wonderful idea.

He saw the white goat strolling up and down near the clothesline, his snowy beard wagging merrily. He saw the clothes flapping on the line. There were red mittens drying, and a fine suit of the farmer's red underwear. There was a pillow case blowing out, just as if it were a pack full of presents for five little chicks.

"I have a feeling that Santa Claus is really coming to those chicks!" Uncle Pig squealed. "Just you wait and see!"

Then he whispered his wonderful idea to the other animals. Mother Hen was so pleased that she ran in circles until she saw everything twice. The cow and the horse grinned from ear to ear.



"Maybe the goat won't help," sighed Grandmother Goose.

"I'll ask him," smiled the sheep. And she went and talked to the goat.

His eyes twinkled.

"I'd love to do it," he said. "Sounds like fun."

The horse, meanwhile, neatly nipped the clothespins from the red mittens, the red underwear, and the pillowcase, and took them off the line.

Uncle Pig, meanwhile, went looking in the junk heap in back of the barn. He looked very sharply, and what did he find?

Oh, some wonderful things: a small tin bank made like a drum, a little red wagon missing one wheel, a small red mitten with a hole in the thumb, a bright green sock that had no mate, a pair of doll's skates (thrown away by mistake), and bits of spruce branches, too small to use in the farmhouse.

"What else do I need?" he said to himself.

Pussycat Smart came padding up.

"Me," she said. "You need me to help tie those bits into a tree. You need me to fix the little wagon with a new wheel, and to pin up the small mitten's hole in the thumb. And you need me to get some crabapples out of the barrel. We'll hang them on the tree!"

The two worked together.

By the time it was late afternoon, they had made a splendid little tree, and Pussycat Smart had put a new wheel on the wagon.

Then they looked at the presents.

"Rather dirty," mewed Pussycat Smart. "They need a good scrub!"

She ran to fetch Grandmother Goose.

"You're the only one of us who can wash them," she mewed.

Grandmother Goose started to say, "Oh, I'm afraid I can't get them clean!" But just then she saw the fine little Christmas tree.

And just then the white goat came around the barn. He made such a jolly Santa Claus all dressed in the red underwear suit, with the red mittens on his ears for a cap and the pillow case slung over his shoulder, that she laughed.

"I'll polish them spic and span!" she promised.

She washed the presents until they looked like new.

Not to be outdone, old Turkey Gobbler filled the drum and wagon and the one red mitten and the one green sock with chicken corn.

Now everything was ready.

Pretty soon the dusk was dark.



Pretty soon the lights in the farmhouse went out.

Pretty soon the stars were shining, and the five little chicks were fast asleep in the chicken coop.

"It's time to go," whispered the barnyard animals. "Come on, Santa Claus goat!"

"I still have things to do," laughed the goat. "Besides, Santa Claus never comes until everyone is asleep."

"That's right!" all the animals agreed, and they hurried away to their beds. All

of them were so glad that Santa Claus was coming to the chicks! But all of them had a wish they were wishing, too.

It was Grandmother Goose who said the wish right out loud.

"I wish Santa Claus would come to me just once," she said, and then she fell asleep.

The Santa Claus goat finished doing the things he still had to do. When he started out, his pack was jammed-crammed full. There seemed to be so much more in it than presents for five little chicks.

Then he tiptoed into the barn and put down his pack.

Out of it he took presents and presents and presents for everyone in the barn.

"A new shawl for Grandmother Goose," he chuckled. "And a basket of apples for the horse. Turnips for the sheep, corn for old Turkey Gobbler, a good smoking pipe for fat Uncle Pig, a catnip mouse for Pussycat Smart, and a bell for Cow. For good Mother Hen, a new blue bonnet—and for me, a rich plum pudding to eat, can and all!"

Very tired he was, the Santa Claus goat, from collecting all those splendid presents. But now the barn looked as exciting as a Christmas tree. He could hardly wait for morning!

"Sleeping's the very best way to get morning to come," the Santa Claus goat told himself wisely.

And he crept quietly into his bed and was soon asleep, still dressed in his funny red Santa Claus suit, and still feeling warm and merry inside from being such a wonderful make-believe Santa Claus.



THE GOLDEN SLED



ONCE upon a time, when Christmas was coming, there was a little brown bear who wanted a sled very much. He started to write a letter to Santa Claus, and then he began to wonder what color sled he wanted.

"Let's see," said this little bear. "Let me see. . . . Some bears like red things best. But I'm not that kind of bear. Some bears like blue things. But I'm not that kind of bear, either."

He remembered hearing about a little bear who wanted his whole room painted purple.

"Purple, purple, purple everywhere!" said the little brown bear. "Now I wouldn't like that at all!"

And he began to look all around the dining room, to see what color he liked best. There was a tall white chocolate pot with golden flowers on it. Those flowers were wonderfully shiny! There was a black chair with golden squiggles on the back. It was a gay chair, very nice for rocking oneself. And the little bear thought the golden squiggles made it even nicer.

There was a golden clock that ticked merrily—tickety-tock, tockety-tick. And there was a fat round jar with letters on it.

The letters were golden.

They spelled out H-O-N-E-Y.

"Honey!" laughed the little bear. "Golden letters spell honey, and honey is golden—and golden gold is the color I like best!"

So he put that in his letter.

"PLEAZ BRING ME A GOLDEN SLED."



"A golden sled!" said his mother when she saw the letter. "Oh, my! You'll have to be a very good bear to get a golden sled!"

"Yes, indeed," said his father. "You'll have to be just as good as gold!"

"Well, I just will!" the little bear said. "I'll just be the very best bear ever."

He brushed his fur suit until it was fluffy and shiny, put on his warm fur cap, and hurried out to mail his letter.

"Oh, my!" said Santa Claus when he read the letter. "A golden sled! Well, here's a problem for me! Golden paint is the hardest to get. Golden paint is what I have the least of! And here's a little bear that wants a whole sled painted golden!"

He thought about that while he was making the sled, and he shook his head.

When the sled was all finished (except for paint), Santa Claus looked at his little jar of golden paint.

"It would take every last drop to paint this sled," he said. "I wouldn't have one smidgeon left to put on anybody's engine, or anybody's chair, or anybody's doll-baby's locket!"

And then Santa Claus decided he would have a look at this good little bear who wanted a golden sled.

So he whizzed up his chimney, climbed out on his roof, and sat down. He took out his spy-glass, and pointed it at the little bear's house. He turned it a bit this way, and a bit that way, to see better.

Now Santa Claus could see the little bear. And oh, my! he could hardly believe his eyes!



First he saw the little bear making his own bed, neat and tidy, tight as a drum.

Then he saw the little bear eating his breakfast, good as gold, with a yum-yum-yum.

He saw the little bear drying the dishes
And putting them away
And sweeping the porch
And putting all the rubber boots in a row, easy to find.

Santa Claus saw the little bear going to the store with a long list, and not forgetting anything.

He saw that little bear helping old bears across the street

And minding baby bears for their mothers

And saying "yes, ma'am" and "no, sir"
with the kindest and most friendly of smiles.



He whizzed down his chimney and took his little jar of golden paint in one hand. Then he searched in his paint box, and way down at the bottom he found a little jar of silver paint, too.

"That does it!" he grinned. "I can put silver on all the engines, instead of gold. I can put silver on all the chairs. And this year, everybody's doll baby will have a silver locket instead of a golden one!"



And all this time Santa Claus could see the little bear's good little heart shining right through his furry coat! It was dancing a happy dance, thumpity-thump—and it was a shining heart, golden as golden, because the little bear was SO good.

"Well, I declare," cried Santa Claus. "This little bear, this good little bear who wants a golden sled, has a heart of gold!"

That made Santa Claus think twice.

Humming to himself, Santa Claus dipped a brush into the golden paint and began to paint the little bear's sled. When the little jar of paint was empty, with not a smidgeon of paint left, the sled was all painted shiny, bright, glittering, glistening, sparkling gold!

And when the good little bear woke up on Christmas morning and put on his slippers and scampered downstairs—

There was his sled under the tree—
Golden as golden!

"Oh, lovely!" he whispered. "And I never did think I'd get a whole golden sled. I never did think I could be good enough!"

His mother kissed him and said, "Why, you're the best little bear in the whole world!"

His father patted his head and said, "Yes, sir, you're just as good as gold!"

The little brown bear said "Merry Christmas" to his father and mother.

He put on his mittens and cap and boots.

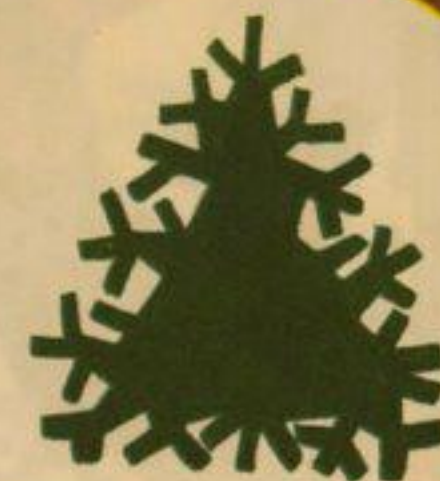
He took his shining golden sled out into the snowy Christmas day.

And he went coasting down the white hill.

Past the dark green trees

Thinking—

"A great big, bright and golden Merry Christmas to everybody in every place in this whole big shining world!"



MR. LION'S PLUM PUDDING



LION read his letter over and over.

"Well, well," he declared at last, "that's the finest thing I ever heard."

"What is?" asked Mrs. Lion.

"My cousin Barnaby,—you remember

him, my dear? He was, er, captured and kindly consented to go to America to live in a zoo. Well, my dear, he says here that in America they have Christmas. Sounds like a most wonderful kind of day, full of presents and snow and candles and candies and cookies. And probably the best part of all is the last, which is called plum pudding!"

"What won't they think of next?" said Mrs. Lion in a sort of faraway voice, because she was busily cleaning the kitchen.

"Hmmm," grunted Mr. Lion, reading his letter just once more. Then he folded it neatly, put it on the shelf, and rubbed his chin.

"Mrs. Lion," he said. "Mrs. Lion, we are going to have Christmas!"

"But I'm just finishing spring house cleaning!" cried Mrs. Lion.

"Never mind that," her husband said, and he began at once to make his plans for Christmas.

"Snow we can't have," he decided. "Presents are out, because I spent my allowance on a beaver hat. Candles and candies and cookies sound lovely, except that I don't know what they are. But plum pudding—now, plum pudding we shall have!"

He opened the cupboards and pulled out bowls. He went to the flour bin and measured flour, spilling it in drifts from one end of the kitchen to the other.

Mrs. Lion grumbled, but Mr. Lion only laughed. "Looks like snow," he said. "Leave it there!"

He stewed plums with sugar until they boiled all over the stove. Then he chopped a bowl of nuts so vigorously that they bounced about the house like popcorn.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Lion. "Oh, dear."

"Now for the suet!" cried Mr. Lion.

He took a large chunk from the refrigerator and mixed it with the other good things. He added more sugar and pinches of spice, and handfuls of raisins; and he worked the whole thing into a round, sticky, slippery ball with his paws. That looked like such fun that Mrs. Lion had to try it, too.

She reached for the pudding, and it slid out of Mr. Lion's paws and out of her paws. Mr. Lion's plum pudding rolled round and round the kitchen, picking up sugar and nuts and flour and raisins as it went.

At last it stopped in the corner.

"Looks ready to cook," grinned Mr. Lion. He wrapped the pudding in one of his wife's best napkins, and since he had to go to the linen closet for that, there were floury tracks all through the house.



But before long, Mr. Lion's pudding was steaming. Before long, Mr. and Mrs. Lion's house smelled richly of spices and plums and sugar. Several friends, Mr. and Mrs. Camel, Grandfather Bear, and Trump, the youngest elephant, dropped in unexpectedly.

"How nice to see you!" cried Mr. Lion. "How did you happen to come?"

"Just followed our noses," grinned Trump, and his long nose certainly was pointing straight at the pudding.

"The pudding!" Mrs. Lion said. "I do believe it's done!"

She put it on the table, roly-poly and steaming and set about with juicy raisins and plums. Mr. Lion stuck a poinsettia in

the center to serve as holly, and everyone sat down to eat.

"A Merry Christmas to all!" cried Mr. Lion.

All his friends bowed and said Merry Christmas, too. And that plum pudding was so delicious that even Mrs. Lion forgot the fuss and bother it had made in her spring-cleaned house.

She did say later, "Nice as Christmas is, Mrs. Camel, I'm glad it comes only once a year!"

"Not here!" said her husband. "No, indeed. I'm going to find out all about candles and candies and cookies from Barnaby—and THEN we'll have Christmas once every month, at the very least!"



THE GOOSE THAT STUFFED HERSELF



OW Tobias Tiger was extremely fond of his family. Nothing pleased him so much as to fetch home a surprise.

be it a bag of molasses taffy—
or a bit of gay ribbon—
or a fine, juicy soup bone.

A surprise of any kind, tucked in his vest pocket, hidden under his jacket, or slipped up his sleeve, made him grin from one striped ear straight across to the other.

So with Tobias Tiger.

And when he came home, early one gray evening halfway between Thanksgiving and Christmas, with a rather scrawny gray goose—well! you'd have thought that Tobias had fetched home the moon.

He flopped the gray goose, quite limp

with struggling, on the kitchen table and rocked proudly back on his heels.

"Poor thing!" cried Mrs. Tiger (whose name was Tabitha), eying the goose. "Poor thing! It does look cold!"

She wrapped it warmly in her own red shawl and rocked it a bit in her Boston rocker.

The little boy tigers patted its sides.

"A very thin goose, isn't it, Papa?" they asked.

Tobias Tiger tried not to look cross.

"Cold it may be, thin it may be," he said, unwrapping his muffler. "But we'll fatten it up and roast it to a turn—and a splendid dinner it will make us on Christmas day."

Mrs. Tiger stopped rocking the goose.

"What a dandy surprise, Mr. Tiger!" she cried. And she plumped the goose onto





her largest platter to see how it would look.

"With a garnish of parsley—" said Tobias Tiger.

"And plenty of stuffing," said his striped sons, "it will make as pretty a goose as ever was eaten!"

At that the goose flipped herself over and began to lick the platter hungrily.

"Can't begin fattening her too soon," Mrs. Tiger observed. She mixed corn meal with milk and stirred it over the fire.

The goose began to eat.

She ate until she was happy.

She ate until she was warm.

She ate until she could not keep one eye open, let alone two.

Then she flapped happily into Mrs. Tiger's lap, tucked her head under the red shawl, and snored loudly.

Mrs. Tiger rocked her gently. The little boy tigers talked in whispers. And Tobias Tiger (ready for bed in his striped pajamas) said good night in a sort of snort and went upstairs.

Before many days had passed, that goose had made herself one of the family.

She followed Roger Tiger about as if she were a dog. She slept on the foot of Will Tiger's bed. She watched the pots and kettles for Mrs. Tiger. And the minute dinner was ready, she honked a happy honk that was better than a gong or bell.

"I do think she should be allowed to eat with us," whispered Mrs. Tiger. "She could sit in Will's old high chair."

Tobias Tiger put his foot down.

"Indeed she'll not!" he shouted. "She'll eat corn meal behind the stove like a fattening Christmas goose!"

Eat corn meal she did. And by the time Christmas was only a week away, that goose was the plumpest, waddlingest,



most mouth-watering goose in the whole white winter world. Tobias Tiger, who was hiding surprises every night now, thought she was the best surprise he had ever brought home.

Roger and Will and Mrs. Tiger thought so, too. But not in quite the same way.

"I've made her a warm red cape and bonnet for Christmas," whispered Mrs. Tiger.

Will said he had made her a wooden eating bowl. And Roger had drawn her a picture of herself, very like her, on a long piece of paper to make room for her neck.

But Tobias Tiger's only concern was how to stuff the Christmas Goose.

"Chestnuts," he decided one night in bed.

The next night he thought, no, bread and celery.

"But I do like a bit of onion," he muttered the following night. Chestnuts and bread and celery and onion swam about in his head.



"I can't sleep!" he cried, throwing his pillow on the floor.

Mrs. Tiger brought him another.

"No better!" he shouted.

Roger brought his fluffy pillow and Will brought his puffy pillow.

"No good," sighed Tobias, wide awake. He would still be awake no doubt, except that the goose slipped through the dark and snuggled under his head. She was



awake all night, because of tiger snoring, and slept late in the morning.

Tobias was up at dawn.

"This morning," he told his family, "I shall kill the fatted goose."

A small moan escaped Mrs. Tiger.

Roger and Will hid their faces in their paws. And Tobias went searching for the goose. He looked everywhere for her, save, of course, in his bed. By ten o'clock, he was tired out with searching, calling, and roaring.

Up to bed he went.

Down he lay. "Lovely, warm, soft pillow," he murmured. "Wouldn't be without it."

Just then the goose stirred and flapped her wings sleepily.

Tobias Tiger leaped out of bed.

"It's you!" he shouted. "It was you all the time!"

The goose smiled sweetly, nodded her head, and went back to her dreams.

"Please don't call our goose 'you,' Papa," whispered Will. "We've named her Tabitha Two, after Mama."

Mrs. Tiger smiled shyly.

And Tobias put on his boots and muffler. Out he went, looking for a surprise. Back he came, with a whopping big turkey all stuffed with chestnuts and bread and

celery and onions, and roasted to a turn.

"There," he said proudly. "There's your Christmas dinner. I hope you think it's a good surprise."

"We do," cried Roger and Will and Mrs. Tabitha Tiger all together, hugging him from every side.

Tabitha Two made a noise that sounded like "A superlatively lovely good surprise!"

And on Christmas day she sat at the table in Will's old high chair. She wore her red cape and bonnet. She ate from her new wooden bowl; and she stuffed herself with turkey until she was twice as plump and smiling as the picture Roger had done of her for a special Christmas surprise.



A VERY BIG CHRISTMAS



was a big, friendly elephant who lived all alone in a small zoo. He loved all the children who came to see him, and he listened to everything they said to each other.

So Trumpet knew that boys play marbles in the springtime, and girls jump rope. He knew about picnics and swimming in the summer. He knew all about raking leaves into a big pile, and jumping

in them in the fall. And he had heard what fun it is to watch the leaves burn, how they make a lovely light and the fine, sharp autumn smell of smoke.

All this Trumpet knew.

And he knew something else.

He knew about Christmas in the winter—and about Santa Claus and his reindeer and his tiny sleigh all filled with toys.



"Oh ho," thought Trumpet, all alone in his big cage. "I know what I want for Christmas. I want somebody to keep me company."

He thought about that very hard.

In fact, he thought about it too hard.

Toward Christmas, he began to forget to eat.

Sometimes he even forgot to listen to all the things the children said to each other. And he stood with his back to them, dreaming and rocking to and fro.

The children were troubled by Trumpet's strange new ways. They asked the zoo keeper what was the matter.

"Well," said the zoo keeper, "I think Trumpet is lonesome. I think he needs someone to keep him company."



"If that's all," the children cried, "we can help Trumpet!"

They saved all their pennies for weeks.

They put on a Christmas show "for the benefit of Trumpet" and got hundreds of pennies for tickets.

They sold Christmas cards—

Shoveled snow off peoples' walks and driveways—

And ran errands at a penny an errand.

By and by, those children had the biggest pile of pennies you ever saw!

They took them to the zoo in wagons and doll carriages and wheelbarrows. Then they whispered mysteriously with the zoo keeper.

"No," they said.

And "Maybe"—

And at last, "Yes, yes, yes! That's the VERY thing!"



On Christmas Eve, the zoo keeper tried to get Trumpet to sleep as soon as it was dark. Trumpet lay down in his straw bed, good as gold. But he did not feel one bit like sleeping.

He was much too excited about Christmas. He stared into the dark, wondering what Santa Claus would bring him.

"Maybe a boy to live with me," he thought. "Or maybe a girl."

But no, boys and girls have mothers who want to tuck them into their own beds at night.

"Maybe he'll bring me a pony," thought Trumpet.

But no, not even Santa Claus could find a pony big enough for an elephant to ride!

"Maybe," thought Trumpet, who was

feeling very tired by now, "maybe Santa Claus doesn't come to animals in the zoo. Maybe I won't get any present at all!"

That was a sad thought for Christmas Eve.

Trumpet squeezed his eyes shut to keep back the tears.

The zoo was quiet now. All the other animals were sleeping.

For a moment Trumpet thought he could hear the snow falling outside. For a moment he thought he heard the stars making a noise like Fourth of July sparklers.

And then he didn't even think he heard anything.

Trumpet was sound asleep.

"At last!" whispered the zoo keeper. "Now for his Christmas surprise!"



Tramp-tramp-tramp! went some very big feet.

"Shush, shush, shush!" said the zoo keeper.

He led a very large, dark shadow through the dark, sleeping zoo. He opened the door of Trumpet's cage without making one single jingle of keys. And the big shadow tiptoed in, lay down right behind Trumpet, sighed a happy sigh, and went to sleep, too.

When it was morning, Trumpet woke up very early.

He rubbed his eyes and looked all around in the front of his cage.

"Oh," he cried. "Santa Claus *doesn't* come to animals in the zoo! He didn't come to me. He didn't bring me anything at all!"

And just as he said that, Trumpet felt something big and warm behind him. The big and warm something woke up and moved and smiled.

"Hello, Trumpet," it said.

Trumpet turned around.

There, right in his very own cage was a beautiful big gray elephant, with a big red bow on her neck and a sprig of holly in the bow, and a card with squiggles written on it.

"I wonder what the squiggles say?" whispered Trumpet shyly.

"I know," said the new elephant, "because the children read them out loud."

She told Trumpet that the card said:

THIS IS CLARINDA, YOUR
NEW WIFE, WITH A
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO
TRUMPET BECAUSE WE
LOVE HIM FROM
ALL THE CHILDREN



Trumpet just smiled and smiled and smiled when he heard that.

And then his heart turned a big somersault, because Clarinda said, "I love you, too, Trumpet."

That was a wonderfully happy thought for Christmas!

"Why," said Trumpet, "why, it's even BETTER than having Santa Claus come!"

Clarinda nodded her head and smiled.

"Much better," she agreed. "If Santa Claus had brought me, he'd have had no room in his pack for one single toy!"

"That's right!" cried Trumpet, laughing at the very thought of his beautiful big new wife riding in Santa's tiny sleigh.

He made Clarinda laugh, too. They laughed until everyone in the whole zoo was awake and calling "Merry Christmas" back and forth.

And one Christmas—

Not *that* Christmas—

Not the next Christmas—

But the *next* Christmas after, Trumpet and his wife had a little baby elephant.

They asked the zoo keeper to put a ribbon on its neck, and a card that said,

MERRY CHRISTMAS
TO ALL THE CHILDREN
BECAUSE **WE** LOVE THEM
.... TRUMPET AND
CLARINDA

The keeper did.

And when the children saw that cute, funny, gay little elephant baby, they were almost happier than Trumpet and Clarinda themselves.

Almost, but not quite, because those two big elephants were filled with happiness from their big ears to their big toes.

And NOBODY could ever be happier than two elephants-full!

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